DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 303 527 UD 026 281

AUTHOR Suzuki, Bob H.
TITLE Cultural Diversity: Increasing Achievement through Equity.
PUB DATE 7 Oct 87
NOTE 10p.; Keynote address presented at the Los Angeles Multicultural Conference (Los Angeles, CA, October 7, 1987).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Viewpoints (120)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Academic Achievement; Bilingual Education; Compensatory Education; *Educationally Disadvantaged; Educational Opportunities; Elementary Secondary Education; *Equal Education; Ethnic Groups; *Minority Groups; *Multicultural Education; Socioeconomic Influences; Teacher Role; Urban Education

ABSTRACT

The socioeconomic future of the United States, and the State of California in particular, is linked to improving the educational achievement of its growing minority populations. Demographic trends and a fundamental shift in international trade will result in a national population that is one-third non-white by the year 2010, with a new emphasis on Asian culture. Minority students will comprise the majority in over 50 major cities throughout the country. Historically, public schools have responded to large waves of immigration with "Americanization" programs, whose goals were to quickly and forcibly assimilate the new arrivals into the mainstream of American life by imposing an Anglo-centric curriculum, punishing students for using non-English languages, and denigrating immigrant cultural traditions. Educational equity must be assured for minorities, especially Blacks and Hispanics, if the development of a two-tiered social system composed of a highly educated white upper class, and a permanent under class which is mostly non-white is to be avoided. Educational equity can be achieved if educators believe that disadvantaged minority students have the capability to learn, and understand the factors involved in successful multicultural education, including the following: (1) high expectations of achievement; (2) respect for learning in the school environment; (3) culturally diverse curriculum; (4) effective teaching methods; and (5) parent involvement. (FMW)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

7-6-98

ED303527

LA County Multicultural Conference

"CULTURAL DIVERSITY: INCREASING ACHIEVEMENT THROUGH EQUITY"

Keynote Address
by
Dr. Bob H. Suzuki
Vice President for Academic Affairs
California State University, Northridge
October 7, 1987

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Bob H. Suzuki
CA State Univ/Northridge
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

INTRODUCTION

I'm very pleased to be invited to address this conference, and particularly pleased to be able to make my presentation here in Pasadena. Back in the early 1970's, I was deeply involved with the desegregation of the Pasadena public schools. It was during that period that my interest in multicultural education first developed.

Shortly afterwards, I went to the University of Massachusetts and became deeply involved in teaching and conducting research in the field of multicultural education. I also worked closely with teachers in helping them implement the concepts of multicultural education in their classrooms. As a result, I developed an enormous amount of respect for the job that public school teachers must do, and so I'm honored to be able to address this group today.

I've been asked to speak to you today on the conference theme, "Cultural Diversity: Increasing Achievement Through Equity." What I'd like to do is to begin my talk by discussing the changing demographics in California--changes that will have a profound impact on all sectors of our society, especially education. I will then provide some historical perspective on these changes by describing similar changes that took place in this country around the turn of the century. Thirdly, in light of the demographic changes, I will discuss the urgent need for increased emphasis on equity in education. Finally, I will suggest ways by which we might achieve educational equity both in the public schools and in institutions of higher education.

UD 026 281

CHANGING DEMOGRAPHICS IN CALIFORNIA

Let me begin by talking about the changing demographics in California. As

a number of recent reports indicate, the U.S. is experiencing dramatic changes in its ethnic demography.

According to the 1980 Census, minorities constituted 21 percent of the total U.S. population, and the rate of growth of the minority population was twice the rate of the white population. In California, it's projected that minorities will become the majority within the next two decades. And nationwide, by the year 2010, it's estimated that almost one out of every three Americans will be non-white.

Moreover, the average age of the minority population is considerably less than that of the white population. Therefore, the birth rate in the minority population is higher so that the minority population is becoming increasingly younger than the white population. Furthermore, minorities are becoming an ever larger proportion of the total working-age manpower pool. They may already consistute one-third of that pool, and will probably eventually constitute one-half of the pool.

The number of people over 65 will also increase markedly during this period. In fact, in 1983, for first time, there were more people over the age of 65 than there were teenagers. There are now 24 million people over the age of 65, 2.2 million over 80, and 30,000 over 100. So, the population of retired people will grow dramatically over the next few decades. Twenty years ago, it's estimated that there were 10 people working for every person retired. Twenty years from now, it's estimated that only about 3 persons will be working for every person retired.

The demographic changes in the school- and college-age population are even more dramatic. Currently, 25 percent of all public school students in the U.S. are minorities. That proportion is 43 percent in California and over 50 percent in Los Angeles. By the year 2000, minority students will comprise the majority in over 50 major cities throughout the United States.

At same time, even though high school completion rates have increased significantly for Black and Hispanic students, their dropout rates are still very high, as high as 40-50 percent in many of the major cities in California, including Los Angeles.

Now, in addition to the demographic changes I've just described, there are yet other changes being propelled by fundamental shifts in the patterns of international trade. Since the founding of the American Republic 200 years ago, the bulk of our trade has been with the European nations.

However, beginning in 1950's, this trade has been gradually shifting from the Atlantic Basin to the Pacific Basin. In 1982, for first time in the history of this country, our trade with the Pacific Rim countries exceeded that with the European countries. This trade is expected to grow to be several times greater over the next several decades. The impact of this growing trade will be especially significant in California, given its strategic location on edge of Pacific Rim.

Due to huge influx of capital generated by this trade, the financial center of this country is expected to shift from New York City to Los Angeles, perhaps within the next few decades. Moreover, since cultural infusion inevitably follows capital infusion, we can also expect to see a major transformation in the nature of American culture, which will be increasingly influenced by Pacific Rim cultures.

The U.S. will also be transformed economically, politically and socially by these changes, and we will experience increasing contacts with Pacific Rim nations. Consequently, our knowledge of the history, culture, politics, economy and languages of these countries will become increasingly relevant to our future well-being.

As result of these changes, the U.S. is experiencing the second largest influx of immigrants in its history. Currently, immigrants from Asia and Latin America comprise about three-quarters of the 1 million or so legal immigrants entering the U.S. annually. About 1/3 of these immigrants end up in California, particularly in Los Angeles, which has been called the "New Ellis Island."

I think we should not be surpised by these demographic changes. We tend to think that the rest of world is like own society in which 75 percent of the population is white. In reality, the actual situation is just the opposite: approximately 75-80 percent of world's people are non-white and live in the non-Western countries of Asia, Latin America and Africa. Now that many of the discriminatory immigration laws have been eliminated, the makeup of this country should gradually change and eventually look like the rest of the world.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Let me next provide some historical perspective to these changes. This country experienced similar changes around the turn of the century--during the period between 1880 and 1920--when the massive immigration from Eastern and Southern Europe was taking place. Altogether an estimated 30 to 40 million people entered the country, more than doubling the total U.S. population.

This massive influx of humanity was accompanied by industrialization and urbanization, which, in turn, created severe social problems, including overcrowded urban ghettos, increasing crime and political corruption, violent labor conflicts, and growing discontent among the working-class poor.

In the face of these problems, the flood of immigrants was viewed with great alarm by the dominant, native-born WASP's and triggered the reactionary Nativist Movement. Starting in the late 1880's, this movement reached its height during and after World War I and was directed primarily at white ethnic groups of Eastern and Southern European origins, resulting in widespread violence against these groups, including several lynchings. In fact, the primary targets of attacks by the Ku Klux Klan during this period were white ethnics who were Catholics.

The Nativism Movement was aided and abetted by the so-called Americanization Movement, whose leaders wished to quickly and forcibly assimilate the millions of new immigrants into the mainstream of American society. The public schools played a major role in this movement through their intensive efforts to "Americanize" the children of the immigrants. They imposed a strongly Anglo-centric curriculum on these children, punished them for using their mother tongues, and denigrated the cultural traditions and values of their parents.

It should also be noted that during this era, IQ testing was started on a massive scale. Almost 2 million military draftees were subjected to IQ testing during World War I. As a result of such testing, the claim was made that persons of Eastern and Southern European origins were genetically inferior in intelligence to native-born WASP's because their IQ scores were found to be 10 to 15 points lower.

I have reviewed this history because I believe we need to learn from the past in order to avoid repeating many of the mistakes that were made during this earlier era. I believe that the forcible assimilation imposed on these white ethnic groups was totally unnecessary. We lost a great deal as a nation in the process, including multi-lingual capabilities, cultural traditions, and the creativity that emanates from one's cultural background. I think it partly accounts for why Americans are among the most linguistically illiterate and culturally chauvanistic people of any of the major world powers. Hopefully, we will not repeat these mistakes as we address the new influx of immigrants and the increasing cultural diversity of our society that we're experiencing today.

THE NEED FOR EQUITY IN EDUCATION

Having presented that historical perspective, let me now go on and discuss the urgent need for increased emphasis on equity in education. As I indicated earlier, the demographic changes I've described have major implications for all sectors of our society. Let me summarize what some of these implications are.

As the figures I have cited indicate, minorities are becoming an increasingly larger proportion of the population. Within two decades, they will constitute one-half of California's population and an even larger proportion of the working-age manpower pool in the State.

At the same time, the white population is becoming older and the minority population is becoming younger. As more and more whites retire, the white population is becoming increasingly dependent on a work force that is becoming increasingly minority to generate the income that pays for retirement benefits.

In light of that trend, consider the fact that nearly 50 percent of the public school children in California are now minorities. If these children are not well educated and fail to get good jobs, many whites in this state will not be able to retire!

I see this as a problem for the entire society--not just that of the minority communities. In fact, the fate of whites and minorities are now inextricably linked. If the younger minority population does not do well, then the older white population will suffer too.

In view of these disturbing statistics and trends, I think it's clear that unless we improve the education of minorities, especially Blacks and Hispanics, our society is likely to become stratified into two segments: one consisting of highly-educated upper- and middle-class whites and another consisting of a permanent underclass which is mostly non-white. It could lead to educational and economic apartheid, which I think would be most disturbing.

In addition, if we allow such a situation to develop, we will be facing critical shortages of educated manpower, particularly in the high tech areas, and our ability to compete with other nations will become increasingly impaired.

Given all of these potential problems, to avoid disastrous consequences for all of us, I think it's clear that we must make major efforts to upgrade the education of minorities at all levels from K through 12 to higher education. In short, we must do everything we can to ensure that there is

equity at all levels of education. Anything less will mean a deterioating quality of life not only for minorities, but for all the citizens of this State.

ACHIEVING EDUCATIONAL EQUITY

Which brings me to the final topic of my talk: How can we achieve educational equity in both the public schools and in institutions of higher education?

Before I address that question, let me say that I define educational equity as a supportive educational environment that enables disadvantaged minority students to achieve academically at a level comparable to that of students in general. Thus, educational equity goes beyond access and includes supportive efforts to increase substantially the chances of academic success for disadvantaged minority students.

Let me say from the outset that I don't have all the answers to the problem of achieving educational equity in our schools and universities. The problem is a very complex one, involving many variables. However, based on my own experiences in promoting educational equity, I'd like to suggest what I think are some important considerations.

First, I believe all educators must develop the attitude that disadvantaged minority students have the same potential capability to learn as other students. Attitudes to the contrary are bound to become self-fulfilling and lead to the failure of these students. I think this happens altogether too often both in the public schools and in institutions of higher education. Yet, we know these students can succeed if we provide them with the necessary support and proper learning environment. This has been demonstrated by a number of exemplary projects throughout the country, including Los Angeles. For example, we all know of the outstanding success of mathematics students at Garfield High School, thanks to the efforts of a dedicated, gifted teacher, Mr. Hymie Escalante.

Another successful program at the higher education level is the Minority Engineering Program. This program was first started at Cal State, Northridge 14 years ago. Prior to the establishment of this program, practically no Black or Hispanic students matriculated through the engineering or computer science programs, which are among the most demanding academic programs in the university. The Minority Engineering Program has been such an outstanding

success that it has been replicated at 16 other California campuses and now enrolls about 2,500 students throughout the State. The retention rate of these students has been around 75 percent, an incredibly high percentage.

These programs clearly demonstrate that minority students do have the intellectual capability to achieve academic success. Therefore, I think one of the first important steps toward the achievement of educational equity is to change the attitudes of teachers, counselors and administrators who do not believe this. I would suggest that conferences, such as this one, as well as seminars and workshops, may be required to bring about the necessary attitudinal changes. Unless educators believe these students can succeed, they are not likely to make the extra effort that is required to develop effective educational equity programs.

Another important consideration I'd like to discuss is the need for all educators to have a good understanding of the factors that lead to effective schooling of culturally diverse student populations. As professional educators, we should know what works and what doesn't work in helping minority students succeed academically. There has been considerable research and many model projects conducted over the past 10-15 years which have given us a much better understanding of the factors that lead to success. Let me mention just a few of those that I believe are especially important.

First, as studies have shown, it's important that teachers have high expectations of minority students. These students can & will achieve if teachers expect them to have the capability to do so. When teachers have this attitude, they won't be satisfied if students are not performing to their expectations.

Secondly, I think it's important that a climate of respect for learning be established in the schools. As studies have shown, the principal of a school can play a critical role in establishing such a climate. Learning must be perceived by both students and teachers as the top priority of the school. The principal must take steps to ensure that problems such as violence and drugs and extracurricular activities such as athletics do not deter the school from pursuing learning as its top priority.

A third important factor is the relevance of the curriculum. The Eurocentric orientation of the curriculum is a problem not only in the public schools, but even more so in institutions of higher education. In redesigning the curriculum at all levels of education, the incorporation of minority persepctives becomes quite essential. Such a multicultural curriculum would not only be of greater relevance and interest to minority students--thereby

increasing their motivation to learn--but it would also enhance the education of all students by providing alternative viewpoints and broader understandings.

A factor that is equally as important as the relevance of the curriculum is the manner in which that curriculum is taught. As educators, we still have a great deal to learn about the most effective ways of teaching various subjects at all levels of education and to students of diverse cultural backgrounds. For example, at Cal State, Northridge, we've been studying the teaching of writing for several years and are beginning to understand the basic concepts students must grasp in order to write well. As part of our educational equity efforts, we've been particularly attentive to teaching approaches that are effective with minority students.

The last factor I'd like to mention is the involvement of parents. A number of studies have shown that such involvement may be critically important to the success of minority students. Schools that have been effective in helping minority students succeed almost always get the parents involved in school activities and in supporting their children's academic efforts. Without the involvement of parents, the schools alone face an almost impossible task.

One final consideration that I'd like to leave with you is the importance of approaching educational equity as a long-term institutional goal that will require a school-wide or university-wide effort. Ingrained attitudes take a long time to change and substantive curricular revisions may take several years to bring about. Based on my own experience in working with both public schools and institutions of higher education, I believe that it takes at least five years of effort to even begin to bring about the necessary institutional changes. Efforts to bring about changes in a much shorter time frame are likely either to fail or to be very short-lived.

These efforts should involve the entire school or the entire university. Individuals working alone can become isolated, frustrated and demoralized very quickly. And leadership from the top is critically important. In a public school, such leadership must come from the principal and the entire school must be involved. At Cal State, Northridge, we are trying to exercise leadership from the top and to get the entire university involved in our educational equity efforts.

CONCLUSION

So much for my suggestions. Let me conclude by saying that many of my

suggestions will not be easy to carry out. They will require exceptional vision, commitment and leadership. However, the future of this State will be heavily dependent on the future of our minority population. If minorities fail in large numbers, the social costs will be such that the future of all of us will be diminished as well.

I think the remarks made by David Saxon when he left the Presidency of the University of California in 1983 are equally applicable to all of our educational institutions. Let me quote his remarks:

> "By the end of this century, California is likely to become the first state in the nation whose population is made up predominantly of members of minority groups... Intelligent self-interest, the welfare of the nation, and justice all demand that we do something to make sure that the young people of the state are qualified for education..."

Clearly, we are moving toward a nation that will be much more diverse in the future. And as David Saxon has suggested: if for no other reason than enlightened self-interest, all of us need to make every effort to see that educational equity is achieved as our society becomes increasingly culturally diverse.

Many of you here at this conference are strategically in positions to assist in these efforts. I hope all of you will work toward the goals and ideals that I've discussed. The future of California and even of the nation may depend on how successfully we meet this formidable challenge.

TABLE 2

CHI SQUARE SUMMARY DATA FOR SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS DIFFERENCES IN CAREER CHOICE OF SECOND GRADE STUDENTS

CATEGORY	RANK	SES LOWER 1	UPPER 2	RAW TOTAL	PERCENT
TEACHER	1	45	32	77	15.7
SPORTSPLAYER	2	24	40	64	13.0
DOCTOR	3	26	37	63	12.8
POLICE	4	31	17	48	9.8
NURSE	5	20	8	28	5.7
OTHER	6	18	10	28	5.7
SERVICE JOB	7	17	9	26	5.3
LAWYER	8	10	14	24	4.9
VETERINARIAN	9	6	17	23	4.7
ENTERTAINER	10	10	12	22	4.5
I DON'T KNOW	11	12	7	19	3.9
SCIENTIST	12	8	10	18	3.7
FIREFIGHTER	13	9	5	14	2.8
PILOT	14	9	4	13	2.6
ARTIST	15	4	8	12	2.4
MODEL	16	2	5	7	1.4
ASTRONAUT	17	4	2	6	1.2
COLUMN TOTAL		255 51.8	237 48.2	492	100.0

CHI-SQUARE	D.F.	SIGNIFICANCE
35.47686	16	0.0034